

20 November, 2014

Kids' healthy lifestyle program celebrates important milestone

A free healthy lifestyle program for children is celebrating reaching an important milestone after helping 500 local families to improve their health and wellbeing.

Go4Fun supports 7-13 year olds and their families to adopt long-lasting and healthy lifestyle choices to become fitter, healthier and happier.

The program encourages children, who are above their ideal weight, to take responsibility for their own health and shows parents and/or carers how they can help their whole family make healthier choices.

Tommy Makdessi, 13, and his sister Katrina, 11, have not looked back since they joined their local Go4Fun program in Caringbah.

They are now physically active for at least one hour every day, they have cut down their portion sizes and they make sure they include the five food groups in the meals they eat.

Tommy said what he enjoyed most about the Go4Fun program was being active, learning how to eat healthily and meeting new friends.

Their mum, Diane, said she has seen her children grow in confidence.

"We joined Go4Fun to learn about nutrition and how I can help my children to have a healthy lifestyle. They are now happier, more confident and they read labels on the food they eat."

Diane said she has learned some interesting new recipes and the family has made significant changes to their eating habits and lifestyle.

"We now make sure we have all the important food groups and we are more physically active.

"The teachers were wonderful and very helpful. Everything was explained clearly for adults and children," she said.

Linda Trotter, local Go4Fun Coordinator at the Health Promotion Service, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District said the Makdessi family is just one of 500 families who have benefited locally from the program since it was established three years ago.

"The program is a really positive and enjoyable family experience and shows how exercise can be fun for children who may not enjoy traditional team sports," she said.

"It focuses on improving eating habits, fitness, teamwork and overall health. Many children who take part in the 10-week program achieve a healthier weight for their age and height, which results in them not only being fitter and healthier but also gives them a boost to their confidence and makes them feel like they've accomplished something really important."

The weekly sessions are held after school or on weekends during term time at locations across the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District. They are delivered by specially trained health and fitness specialists and include informative games, activities, tips on healthy food, how to read food labels and portion size.

They are designed to improve the child's self-esteem and confidence and build a foundation for long-term healthy living.

Local results of the program show:

- An increase in the number of days of physical activity from two to three;
- An extra four hours per week of physical activity;
- A reduction of four hours per week spent on sedentary activities like watching TV.

Registrations for the next school term are now open. To register or find out more about program locations, please visit www.go4fun.com.au or call local Go4Fun coordinator Linda Trotter on 9382 8641.

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For more information or interviews contact Alison Purdy on 9382 8226 or 0482 682 722.

Additional case study

10-year-old Evie Morris has made significant changes to her eating habits since joining her local Go4Fun program in Sutherland Shire and now, along with her mum, Kimberley, makes healthier food choices.

She said she signed up for the program to get fitter and healthier.

"The best things about Go4Fun were the swimming and the games. I also learned about portion sizing and more friendly foods," she said.

Kimberley said she now reads food labels to find healthier options for her family to eat.

"I am finding everything so interesting. I learn something new every week," she said.

Evie says she now wants to continue with her healthy eating goals.